



## What Happens When a Police Officer Stops Your Vehicle

### Why did you stop me?

*-The first question an officer usually hears-*

The laws governing driving privileges consist of over 170 pages. It is not uncommon for a driver to be in violation of a law without knowing it.

**Moving Violations** are the most common reasons a vehicle is stopped. Some examples include speeding, failure to stop at a red light or a stop sign, failure to use a turn signal, or not having a child properly restrained.

**Registration or Equipment Violations** are other reasons a vehicle may be stopped by an officer.


**Criminal Investigations** often involve searching for a “get-away” car. In today’s mobile society, offenders often use cars or trucks to facilitate their activities. Your vehicle may be similar to the description of a suspect’s vehicle from a recent crime.


**Safety Concerns** are other reasons an officer might stop your vehicle. For instance, your trunk may be open, something may be hanging from under your vehicle, or you may have left groceries on your roof.


## Keeping the Lines of Communication Open


*-Steps to follow if you are stopped-*

 **Stop your vehicle as far out of the lane of traffic as possible.** Turn your flashers on, which indicates to the officer that you are going to comply.

 **Stay in your vehicle, and turn on the interior light.** Good lighting assists good communication. Relax and remain in your vehicle. If you leave the vehicle, you subject yourself and the officer to the dangers of traffic.

 **Keep your hands in view, preferably on the steering wheel.** Wait for the officer to request your license, registration, and proof of insurance.

 **Police officers are trained to ask for identification first, and provide an explanation second.** First, provide the proper documentation. Then give the officer a chance to explain the reason you were stopped. Providing your documentation will simplify and speed the process. Remember, most often the officer is in uniform with a name tag displayed. You have the advantage of knowing with whom you are dealing. Extend the courtesy by providing the requested identification without argument.

 **If you do not agree with the citation, or the officer's demeanor, do not argue at the scene.** All citizens have the right to question their citation before a judge. Many police departments have an internal affairs system in place to investigate citizen complaints.

## Did You Know?

*-Some rules of the road-*

**Carry Proper Identification.** When driving a motor vehicle, you must have in your possession: your valid driver's license, proof of vehicle registration, and proof of current insurance for the vehicle. If you are stopped and you do not have all of these items with you, a citation may be issued.

It is the driver's (not the owner's) responsibility to be sure that the vehicle being driven is insured and that the proper documents are in the vehicle.

It is the owner's responsibility to ensure that the person driving the vehicle possesses a valid driver's license.

**Monitor Occupants.** As the driver, you are responsible for the conduct of all the occupants of the vehicle. This covers such things as passengers throwing trash out a window, hanging their arms or legs out of a window, or acting in a disorderly manner. (This includes allowing controlled substances or open containers of alcoholic beverages to be brought into your vehicle.)

As the driver, it is your responsibility to ensure that all passengers are wearing their seatbelts, and that children are properly secured. Therefore, if a police officer stops your vehicle, do not remove your seatbelt.

**Signal Your Intentions.** You must signal your intent to turn or change lanes at least 100 feet before performing the action.

## **Why do they do what they do?**

### ***-Common questions about police procedures and their answers-***

“Why was the officer so cautious when approaching my car?”

Police officers are trained to minimize their exposure to traffic and, therefore, reduce the likelihood they will be injured.

The officer’s safety is also a concern. When stopping a vehicle, officers do not know the intent of the driver. Therefore, police officers are trained in officer safety procedures to minimize risks while making traffic stops.

“If it’s only a minor offense, why did two or three officers show up?”

Other officers in the vicinity frequently check on each other which is a common law enforcement practice.

“Why do the officers sit in the car for so long? What are they doing?”

The officer is verifying your driving privileges and vehicle registration status through one statewide computer system. In that there are many officers trying to gain access to the same computer system, delays can be expected.

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